

Power and Changing Roles in Salem Witch Trials: The Case of George Jacobs, Sr.

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1. Introduction

One of the many fascinating features in the Salem witch-hunt records is that they not only give us information on the formalities and practices of law court procedures in late seventeenth-century New England but also on the attitudes and behaviour of the examiners, accusers and defendants in a courtroom situation of the past.¹ We can trace the ways and strategies of showing power and attempts at converting conventional power relations by discursal means. Maintaining, gaining and losing power are most clearly seen in the examination records including direct-speech utterances of the examiners and defendants.² The default setting in examinations is that the examiners or investigators exercise power while the defendants are “powerless”, which is evidenced by their replies (see, e.g., Hiltunen 2010: 62–63). Aspects of politeness (see, e.g., Brown and Levinson 2004 [1987]; Kryk-Kastovsky 2006) are of great relevance in determining and estimating power relations between the participants of the courtroom discourse: exercising power is naturally linked with expressions of impoliteness.

Although the examination records offer the most fruitful topic for the study of power-related discourse, witness depositions and the documents representing officialese are also worth studying. Depositions mainly give evidence of the narrative elements included in the law court records but also of the attitudes of the witnesses. Different depositions focusing on the same examinee or the same event are worth comparing as they often follow the same structural pattern and may describe events using practically identical phraseology. This could even be regarded as one way for the court to maintain and express its power in finding the accused guilty of witchcraft.

Official documents, such as warrants, mittimus, summonses and indictments, contain various, mainly conventional and even formulaic ways of displaying power naturally associated with authority and its representatives. As most of these documents include an order or request for some activity, expressions emphasizing rapid and unfailing action are the most obvious power statements in them.

The most easily definable discursal items indicating power and politeness in courtroom examinations are the types and forms of questions and answers. *Yes/no* questions show the control by the examiner more clearly than open or *wh*- questions and are thus more likely to indicate power (Archer 2002: 7–9; Kryk-Kastovsky 2006: 222–228, 2010: 161–165). The use of imperatives and other deontic expressions indicates power. Underestimation or doubt in regard to the other discussant’s utterance can also be expressed by the use of certain discourse markers, such as *well*, *why* and *now* (Culpeper and Kytö 1999; Kryk-Kastovsky 2006: 230–239). Impoliteness, especially when connected with aggressive comments, is naturally connected with exercising power (Kryk-Kastovsky 2006; Kahlas-Tarkka and Rissanen 2007). Failure to observe Grice’s cooperative principles is one possible aspect in analysing impoliteness (Archer 2002).

Politeness is not only a discursual element directed to the addressee. In a recent article on Salem dialogues, Chaemsathong (2009) refers to the concepts of self-politeness and self-face (cf. also Chen 2001). He argues that the defendants may have been concerned with what the other people in the courtroom thought of them. In other words, the speakers were aware of their own performance on the examination occasion, their “face” (Chaemsathong 2009: 59, 63).

It seems, however, that general speaker-hearer theories and politeness considerations are not quite sufficient for the analysis of the utterances of the defendants in the very special and dramatic discourse situation of the Salem examinations, although they offer a valuable and useful starting point for this analysis. The reactions of the defendants accused of witchcraft were not primarily determined by conventional politeness criteria or rules of discourse: the main concern of the accused was of course saving his or her life. Connected with that was the question of how their replies and comments would correspond to the highly religious atmosphere in late seventeenth-century Salem and how they could avoid risking their salvation after the execution looming ahead.³ The attitudes and discourse strategies of those defendants who admitted guilt in the hope of saving their lives in that way differ in many ways from those of the defendants who stubbornly claimed innocence. The discourse of the latter group is more interesting because of its argumentative and rhetorical elements, which also involved aspects of politeness and power. The discourse of the Salem defendants denying guilt includes at least the following aims:

- (1) To convince the examiners that the defendant is innocent.
- (2) To convince the audience that the defendant is a good Christian and a good member of the Salem congregation.
- (3) To convince him/herself that God will help him/her.
- (4) To convince him/herself that law and justice will protect him/her.
- (5) To show the audience the defendant’s wit and mastery of the situation.

The most frequent discursual devices appearing in the utterances of the defendants denying guilt are the following (Kahlas-Tarkka and Rissanen 2011: 244–255):

- (1) Use of figurative language
- (2) Appeals to God and Christ
- (3) Addressing the examiner(s)/audience
 - asking questions
 - using imperatives
 - advising the examiner(s)
 - questioning the justification of the accusations
- (4) Irony and sarcasm
- (5) Expressions of aggressiveness
- (6) Laughter

The first two points in this list of discursual devices refer mainly to items 1–3 in the list of aims above; their main purpose is to give emphasis to the defendant’s statements of innocence. Points 3–6 are more related to the power setting in the examination situation, including impoliteness; they refer mainly to items 1, 4, and 5 in the aims list.

2. The case of George Jacobs Sr.

In this paper I will comment on the different types of documents produced in connection with the case of George Jacobs Sr., from the warrant of arrest, dated 10 May 1692, to the indictment, dated 4 August in the same year. This indictment was marked as *billa vera* and it confirmed the fate of Jacobs⁴: he was hanged on 19 August 1692. In addition

to these two types of documents, the material includes two examinations, a number of witness depositions, a mittimus, a summons and two accounts of physical examination. The documents are included in Rosenthal et al. (2009). The detailed indexing and chronological arrangements of the records in Rosenthal et al. (2009) proved most useful for my survey.

I have chosen the documents illustrating the case of George Jacobs Sr. as the topic of my survey mainly because Jacobs is perhaps the most interesting male character in the Salem drama and because the number and types of the records relating to his case are ample and varying. His behaviour and utterances in the examination situation differ from those of the other Salem male defendants denying guilt.⁵ He was a landowner, in his seventies, and had lived in Salem for about thirty years. He tells the Court he cannot read, but, judging by the examination records, his verbal talent and argumentative skills were admirable. He was married twice, had three children from his first marriage and at least one granddaughter. Both his son and daughter-in-law and particularly their daughter Margaret play a role in the trial process (see *Salem Witch Trials*, <http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/>). It might be added that, judging by the extant examination records, Jacobs was the best informant on Early American English of all the Salem defendants.

2.1 Arrest warrant

As mentioned above, the first reference to George Jacobs Sr. in the extant records is the warrant for the apprehension of Jacobs and his granddaughter Margaret (131). The typical pattern of the earliest Salem arrest warrants includes the following items:

- (1) The name(s) of the accused
- (2) Description of the “crime”
- (3) The persons issuing the complaint
- (4) The “afflicted” or the “victims” of witchcraft
- (5) The site and date of the examination

Jacobs’s warrant, written in Hathorne’s hand, is shorter than most other early warrants, omitting points 3–5. Its body text is as follows:⁶

You are in theire Majes^{ts} names hereby required to apprehend and forthwith bring before vs George Jacobs Sen^r of Salem, And Margaret Jacobs the daughter of George Jacobs Jun^r of Salem Single woman Who stands, accused, of high Suspition of Sundry acts of witchcraft by them both Committed on Sundry persons in Salem to theire great wrong and Injury and hereof faile not Dated Salem May 10th 1692

In this warrant, power expressions are conventional and mild. The text begins with the deontic phrase “you are . . . required” followed by the temporal adverb “forthwith”. At the end of the text there is a formulaic phrase indicating power, “and hereof faile not”. In many other warrants, including those written in Hathorne’s hand, the phrase “at your peril” is added to this formula. It is possible that the shortness and simplicity of the Jacobs warrant is due to the fact that it was written in haste; it was dated on the same day as Jacobs’s examination took place. This may also explain the omission of the place or time of the examination.

The lack of details in the warrant to apprehend Jacobs may also suggest that there was not much evidence or claim for accusing him. The case seems to take shape in the course of the process – an interesting feature in the analysis of legal procedures, in all times.

2.2 Examinations

The most dramatic documents illustrating the Jacobs case are no doubt the records of his two examinations (133), recorded by Samuel Parris, minister of Salem village. The first, which took place on 10 May 1692, is recorded as direct-speech discourse between Jacobs

and the examiners. The second, which took place the following day, mainly concentrates on questions directed to the witnesses – the “afflicted” young girls. From the point of view of discourse and power relations, the first examination is worth a fairly detailed analysis.

The very opening of the examination differs from most other examination records:

Here are them that accuse you of acts of witchcraft.
 Well, let vs hear who are they, & what are they.
 Abigail Williams
 Jacobs laught
 Because I am falsly accused – Your worships all of you do you think this is true?
 Nay: what do you think?
 I never did it.
 Who did it?
 Don’t ask me.
 Why should we not ask you? Sarah Churchwell accuseth you, there she is.
 I am as innocent as the child born to night, I have lived .33. yeares here in Salem.
 What then?
 If you can prove that I am guilty, I will lye under [= ‘accept’] it.
 ...
 Pray do not accuse me, I am as clear as your Worships; You must do right judgment

Instead of asking whether Jacobs is guilty, or why he afflicted his “victims”, the examiner makes a fairly mild and unaggressive comment, “Here are them that accuse you of acts of witchcraft.” Jacobs is full of fighting spirit and perhaps sees his opportunity to change the power relations of the event. He takes the role of the questioner. His first reply begins with the discourse marker “well”, which, according to Kryk-Kastovsky (2006: 230) may represent a covert case of impoliteness and seeking power. “Well” is followed by the aggressive-sounding use of the imperative “let vs hear”. The examiner seems to have been taken by surprise and gives a simple answer mentioning Abigail Williams. Jacobs laughs, thus maintaining his power position by being openly impolite. The examiner’s next question is not recorded, but judging by Jacobs’s reply it deals with the reason for his laughter. Jacobs continues with an aggressive statement of his innocence. He attacks the examiners by saying he is falsely accused and strengthens his power position by asking another question. The examiner’s reply shows his embarrassment: “Nay” could be interpreted as complete loss of his accuser role, and the lame counter-question “what do you think?” confirms this. After Jacobs’s denial, the examiner continues with the less powerful *wh*-question “Who did it?” Jacobs’s reply, “Don’t ask me”, with the negative imperative, is impolite and even aggressive.

The examination continues but Jacobs has the upper hand. He says he is as innocent as a newborn baby and continues that he has lived 33 years in Salem. This can be regarded as breaking Grice’s maxims of quantity and relation. This is indicated by the examiner’s obviously puzzled response, *what then?* Jacobs does not bother to elaborate on his statement but continues with a conditional clause indicating that the accusations are false, “If you can prove that I am guilty, I will lye under (= ‘accept’) it”. After that Jacobs boldly compares himself with the examiners and advises them in an openly impolite way: “I am as clear as your Worships; You must do right judgment”. A little later follows the word-play that could be analysed as a means of saving self-face by way of amusing the audience: “You tax me for a Wizard, you may as well tax me for a Buzard. I have done no harm”.

Towards the end of the examination Jacobs shows his tactical skill by referring to religion and Christ. He points out that Christ has suffered three times for him, and his final comment, beginning again with the discourse particle *well*, is most impressive: “Well! burn me, or hang me, I will stand in the truth of Christ, I know nothing of it”.

This discourse offers, of course, possibilities for various interpretations. However, it is difficult to avoid the impression that the power relations have, at least to a certain extent,

been upset in Jacobs's examination. Jacobs starts asking questions at the very beginning of the examination, and throughout the event he – either consciously or instinctively – uses power-related discursial devices to maintain his role as an unyielding innocent person who refuses to be mastered or overpowered by the Court. He uses laughter, irony, conditional clauses, imperatives and discourse particles as means of indicating impoliteness and, consequently, power.

In any analysis of the language and discourse of the Salem documents, the question of the role played by the scribe or recorder of the documents is of course highly relevant (see, e.g., Grund 2007; Hiltunen and Peikola 2007). Are the words and expressions referred to above George Jacobs's or Samuel Parris's? It is difficult to believe that Parris would be responsible for the shape and wordings of the dialogue. For one thing, the recorders of most of the first-person dialogue documents seem to have done their best to reproduce the utterances as accurately as possible. They were well aware that these dialogues would be of essential importance in the trials at the Court of Oyer and Terminer. Furthermore, the dialogue commented on above gives much credit to Jacobs and even seems to make him the hero of the situation. Parris would have had no motivation for changing the dialogue to reach this kind of effect or for inventing the kind of expressions he records. Rather, it would have been in his interest to get the accused found guilty and to make the witches appear "witchlike". His own family was involved: his daughter, Elizabeth Parris, was one of the accusers and "victims". If the accusations had been found false, it would have affected Elizabeth, and the whole family might have suffered.

Jacobs was examined again on the following day, 11 May. This examination, too, was recorded by Samuel Parris, but it is not rendered in the form of first-person dialogue between the examiners and Jacobs in the same way as the first one. The examiners mainly concentrate on extracting evidence from the five "victim" girls, Abigail Williams, Ann Putnam, Mercy Lewis, Elizabeth Hubbard and Mary Walcott. Of these, Abigail Williams and Mary Walcott are also mentioned in the first examination, although the most active accuser was Sarah Churchill, Jacobs's young servant. An interesting short first-person exchange is recorded at the very end of this examination that confirms the impression we have of Jacobs's attitude and character. It is, once again, Jacobs who asks the yes/no question and the examiner who gives a simple answer:

Are not you the man that made disturbance
No great disturbance. Do you think I use Witchcraft?
Yes, indeed.
No I use none of them.

There are only a few other examination documents of male defendants denying guilt and recorded in the form of first-person direct-speech dialogue, most notably those of George Burroughs, William Hobbs and John Willard. The examination of Burroughs includes very little direct speech, but those of Hobbs and Willard can be compared with Jacobs's.

William Hobbs was not hanged, although the details of the procedure that resulted in his acquittal are not known. In the examination (90) he systematically denies being a witch but does it in the simplest possible way, mostly with short negations, or by appealing to God. The comparison of the beginning of his examination with Jacobs's is revealing:

[What] say you, are you guilty or not?
[I] can speak in the presence of God safely, as I must look to give account another day, that I am as clear as a newborn babe.
Clear: of what?
Of Witchcraft.
Have you never hurt these?
No.

Hobbs answers the examiner's questions briefly and in simple terms, although he begins his defence with an appeal to God and uses the familiar newborn baby simile. He addresses the examiners only twice, both times with the phrase, "You may judge your pleasure".

Can you act Witchcraft here, & by casting your eyes turn folks into fits?
 You may judge your pleasure, my soul is clear.
 Do you not see you hurt these by your look
 No, I do not know it.
 You did not answer to that question, dont you over-look them?
 No, I don't over-look them.
 What do you call that way of looking upon persons, & striking them downe?
 You may judge your pleasure.

"You may judge your pleasure" could be regarded as impolite, with the implied addition, "but you are wrong". But it is just as possible that Hobbs simply indicates that he gives the power of decision to the examiners. The contrast to Jacobs's dialogue is obvious: Hobbs's attitude is humble and his replies short.

The examination of John Willard (173) resembles to some extent that of Jacobs. Willard was a deputy constable in Salem but it is said that he left that office because he felt that the villagers were unjustly accused of witchcraft. He soon became one of the accused, possibly because of his negative attitude towards the trials. Like Jacobs, Willard seems to have been a brave man and an independent thinker, although much younger than Jacobs. Unlike Hobbs, he did not adopt the strategy of being humble and docile. The beginning of the examination is, however, different from Jacobs's:

Here is a returne of the warrant that you were fled from Authority that is an acknowledgement of guilt, but yet notwithstanding this we require you to confesse the truth in this matter.
 I shall, as I hope, I shall be assisted by the Lord of Heaven, & for my going away I was affrighted
 & I thought by my withdrawing it might be better,
 I fear not but the Lord in his due time will make me as white as snow.
 What do you say? Why do you hurt them, it is you or your appearance?
 I know nothing of appearance.

Willard does not begin the examination with questions like Jacobs but with a rather elaborate appeal to God. A little later he corrects the examiner by pointing out that only the minister has the right to estimate his sins – not the examiner; this can be regarded as mild impoliteness: "S^r as for sins I am guilty of if the Minister askt me I am ready to confess". He is more openly impolite a little later. When the examiner asks him to open his mouth, he retorts, "I will stand with my mouth open, or I will keep it shut, I will stand any how, if you will tell me how".

The most interesting feature connected to power relations in Willard's examination is that he gives advice to the examiners as to the people that should be heard as witnesses: his wife and Aaron Wey. He also asks that Ann Putnam should not approach him but some other person.

There are a great many lyes told, I would desire my wife might be called
 Peter Prescot testified that he with his own mouth told him of his beating of his wife
 He urged Aaron Wey to speak
 Aaron wey thereupon said if I must speak, I will, I can say you have been very cruell to poor creatures.
 Let some person go to him
 Ann Putman said she would go.
 He said let not that person but another come

However, Willard's examination does not give the impression that the defendant is actually mastering the discourse event in the same way as Jacobs. Although the value of

Table 1. *Types of utterances by George Jacobs Sr., John Willard, and William Hobbs in their examination record.*

	Advising examiners		Questions	Other addresses	Replies and comments	Total
	Imperative	Other				
Jacobs Sr.	4	1	4	1	12	22
Willard	2	3	—	1	17	23
Hobbs	—	2	—	—	31	33

statistics is highly questionable in this kind of analysis, the figures in Table 1 are illustrative:

No fewer than ten out of Jacobs's 22 utterances address the examiners; he uses the imperative four times. Willard and Hobbs are much less outspoken: six and two addresses, no questions. And it is worth noting that Hobbs, the meekest of the three in his attitude, was the only one of them to save his life.

The examinations of the other male defendants do not add anything relevant to the picture. Most of them are short and contain little or no direct speech, many are later copies, and as most defendants admit guilt, no real debate situation exists.

2.3 *Depositions*

The depositions of the witnesses played a decisive role in Jacobs's case. They can be divided into two groups; those given more or less at the time of the examination and those dated in early August, in connection with the Trial of the Court of Oyer and Terminer.

Five of the six early depositions, probably given at the same time in May as Jacobs's examination took place, were by the young girls who claimed to be "afflicted" by Jacobs; this was the general pattern of the examinations. These depositions, by Mercy Lewis, Abigail Williams (two documents), Ann Putnam and Sarah Churchill, very much resemble each other, again following the general pattern.

Mercy Lewis begins her testimony (134) with a brief description of Jacobs: old, very grey-headed, had had two wives. Then she tells us that Jacobs urged her to write in his book; that was, of course, the Devil's book. As she bravely refuses to do that, there follows a description of the torment: beating her black and blue with a stick and with two sticks, pinching and beating her. Jacobs also threatens to kill her and is almost ready to pull her bones out of joint. Pinching and tearing to pieces seem to have been typical of all witches, both female and male (see Hiltunen 2010: 66–67). But, surprisingly, Jacobs also promises to give Mercy Lewis gold and fine things if she writes her name in his book. And her conclusion is firm: "I verily beleue in my heart that George Jacobs is a most dreadfull wizzard and that he hath very often afflicted and tormented me by his acts of wicthcraft".

The depositions by Abigail Williams and Ann Putnam (135 and 136) do not add anything relevant to the testimony of Mercy Lewis. On the contrary, they are very brief, and reading them makes us wonder how they were actually produced. Abigail Williams's testimony is written in the third person by Samuel Parris. Jacobs is, once again, described as an old man with two sticks whose name is Jacobs, and he urges Abigail to set her hands to the book and pinches her.

Ann Putnam's testimony is even shorter and less detailed than Abigail's: no description, no mention of the Devil's book or of the methods of torment. Her conclusion, too, is that Jacobs is a "dreadfull wizzard". Sarah Churchill's testimony (258) tells us only that "Master Jacobs called her bitch witch & ill names & then afflicted her".

Two men, Thomas and John Putnam (137) testify that they have seen Jacobs torment the girls; in other words, they have seen the girls in such pain during the examination, "as if

indeed their bones would haue ben disioynted: being in such misery as we could hardly hold them". The disjointed bones seem to go back to Mercy Lewis's deposition.

There are also other depositions of some interest. Two documents (470 and 474) testify that an extra tit, or even three tits, were found on Jacobs's body. They were "within his mouth upon y^e Inside of his right Cheake and 2^d upon his right shoulder blade and 3rd upon his right hipp" (474). That the tits were witches' tits was proved by the fact that when they were pierced with a pin, Jacobs was "not sensible of it". It was also important that "their was neither watter blood nor Curruption nor any other matter" in the tit (470). The witch tits were sure signs of witchcraft because the witch fed the Devil in this way. One of the testimonies gives the rough dating "sometime in May last"; the other does not give any date but it was presented to the Grand Jury on August 4.

Another important document presented to the Grand Jury in August, is the "statement" made by five girls: Mary Warren, Elizabeth Hubbard, Mary Walcott, Sarah Churchill and Sarah Bibber (480). The testimonies of the girls simply and very briefly repeat some of the forms of torture mentioned in the earlier depositions and express their conviction that Jacobs is a wizard. The only interesting and imaginative addition is by Sarah Bibber, who tells us how "she saw . . . George Jacobs at y^e Gallows when Goody Olliuer was Executed & y^e black man help him vp. & y^t she saw him afflict Mary Walcot & beat hir with his Staff".

There are three more depositions, dated in August 1692, including new information. The first two (481 and 482) are given by John DeRich, a sixteen-year-old boy. He tells us in his first deposition that two deceased people, a married couple, appeared to him and threatened to tear him to pieces if he did not go to Hathorne and tell him that Jacobs had killed them. This sounds rather dramatic, but the boy's story gets even wilder. He accuses a number of people of various things and gives the impression of being somewhat deranged:

Likewise Phillip English & his Wife Mary Doth appear to this Deponent & afflict him and all the aboves^d Persons Thretten to tare this Deponent in peices: if he doth not Signe to a Booke: . . . Likewise a woman appeares to this Deponent who Lives at Boston at y^e Vper End of the Towne whose name is Mary: she goes in black Clothes hath: but one Eye: with a Crooked Neck and she saith there is none in boston like her. she did afflict this Deponent but saith she will not any more: nor tell him her Name/

DeRich's second testimony concentrates on Jacobs only; it is just as imaginative as the first: Jacobs had told DeRich that he should not eat Jacobs's cherries. This may even be true if it was Jacobs and not his apparition. But then comes the old story of Jacobs's apparition demanding DeRich to put his hand on the Devil's book and the description of pinching, scratching and biting. DeRich adds a new detail: Jacobs tried to drown him and told him that he had been a wizard for forty years.

Perhaps the most interesting – and most moving – of the testimonies is Joseph Flint's account (483) of how he had gone to Jacobs and told him that his granddaughter Margaret had confessed to being a witch. Jacobs, probably upset, had said that she should not have confessed if she were innocent, and added that "if She were Innocent & yet Confest She would be accessary to her owne death". This deposition is in accordance with Jacobs's attitude towards false confessions; perhaps it also implies his idea that consistent declaration of innocence is necessary because the truth would finally win out.

Summing up the depositions against Jacobs, it is obvious that the girls' accounts are very weak and general, repeating the same things and even using similar expressions. Their elementary quality should be obvious to everyone. The tit examinations sound equally artificial, and John DeRich's testimony tells us more about the deranged mind of the boy than of Jacobs's witchcraft and sorcery.

Unfortunately this rather depressing picture of the quality of the depositions can be found in the great majority of the Salem testimonies. But there are also depositions that,

although unconvincing, give us an excellent view of life in seventeenth-century Salem and also of human relations in the village. John Westgate's deposition against Alice Parker (268) is also a good example of the narrative skill of ordinary Salem people: vivid, full of detail and even excitement. Westgate tells us how John Parker's wife came to a pub where Westgate, Parker and other villagers were having a good time and scolded her husband. Westgate told her that it was an "vnbeseeeming thing for her" to come after her husband to the tavern and "raile after thatt rate". At the end of the pub evening, Westgate was going home, probably having consumed a few beers, and saw a black hog running towards him with its mouth open, "as though he would have deuoured me att that Instant time". He stumbled and his knife pierced his thigh so that his stocking and shoe were filled with blood. He crawled home and the hog followed him. He was certain that the hog was "Either y^e Diuell or some Euell thing", probably Goody Parker.

2.4 Mittimuses, summonses, and indictments

After the two examinations, on the 10th and 11th of May, a mittimus (146) for imprisoning Jacobs and nine other accused, was sent to the jail keeper. This document is dated 12 May, only one day after the second examination. The only interesting details in this highly formal document are the rather general definition of the "crime" – "sundry acts of witchcraft . . . whereby great hurt hath bene donne them" [the "victims"] – and the list of the "victims", six names and "others". The formulaic end phrase "and hereof you are not to faile" rounds off even in this document. Most of the Salem mittimuses were written by Hathorne. They are formulaic; only the names are added and some minor changes made in the wording.

The next step in the procedure is the summons of witnesses (475). The Court of Oyer and Terminer was to make a decision in the case of Jacobs at the beginning of August. The witnesses summoned were Joseph Flint, John Waters Sr., John DeRitch, Corporal John Foster, Captain Putnam and his wife Rebecca. It is noteworthy that they were not the hysterical girls but grown-ups (with the exception of John DeRitch).

The summonses were written by Hathorne or Stephen Sewall. They are formulaic, following the same pattern and phraseology, although there is some variation in the number and emphasis of the power phrases, such as "all excuses laid aside" or "fail not at your utmost peril". The only slightly more personal formulation can be seen in the summons of a single witness, James Greenslit (434), with an emphatic end command, "& not depart y^e Court without lycense or leaue of s^d Court hereof fail not On penalty of One hundred pounds money to be leuied on your Goods Chattels &c^a".

Two indictments, or formal accusations (478), (479), were issued on 4 August. Both have exactly the same wording. Obviously they were compiled by a professional scribe (unknown to us); only the names and dates are added to empty slots by Stephen Sewall. Although a number of "victims" were involved, each indictment mentions only one by name, with the rather vague addition "and also for sundrey other Acts of witchcrafts" (478).

One of the two indictments against Jacobs was rejected and *Ignoramus* written at the end of the document. But the indictment for afflicting Mary Walcott was decreed to be true, *billa vera*, and that brings us to the end of the Jacobs story: on 19 August 1692, George Jacobs Sr. was "hanged by ye Neck vntill he be dead", to quote the formula. The death warrant has not survived; in fact only two (313, 418) have been preserved (Rosenthal et al. 2009: 53). They follow the same format, and Jacobs's warrant may have closely resembled the wording of Bridget Bishop's (313), who was found guilty of

vseing practising and exercising . . . [certain acts of] Witchcraft in and vpon the bodyes of Abigail Williams, Ann puttnam Jun Mercy Lewis, Mary Walcott and Elizabeth Hubbard . . . whereby their bodyes were hurt, afflicted pined, cons[umed] Wasted and tormented contrary to the forme of the Statute in that Case [made and] provided

The return by the Sheriff George Corwin tells us that he took Bishop to the site of execution and “Caused y^e s^d Brigett to be hange[d] by the neck untill Shee was dead”. In all probability Jacobs’s death warrant follows the same austere pattern.

3. Concluding remarks

I hope that my survey of the Salem documents on the examination, trial and execution of George Jacobs Sr. has given some further illustration of the evidence the surviving records can give us of those tragic events. The examination accounts draw a picture of a brave, intelligent and most versatile old man, who did not hesitate to take the role of master of the discourse situation and to upset the power relations by using questions, imperatives, irony and laughter as his weapons. By this attitude and behaviour, however, he signed his death warrant.

The thinness, if not manipulation, of the evidence against Jacobs can be seen in the repetitiveness or rambling character of the depositions of the young girls, the “victims” of witchcraft. Some colourful details are included, mainly to emphasize Jacobs’s evilness and witchcraft, but these accounts are exaggerated and in many cases just show the witness’s misplaced imagination. The other documents connected with the Jacobs case – arrest warrant, mittimus, summonses and indictments – are conventional and formulaic and do not add relevant details to the course of events. In this respect, the documentation follows the general pattern of Salem witchcraft trials.

George Jacobs Sr.’s exceptional bravery and eloquence in challenging the accustomed examiner-examinee power relations can be confirmed if his examination record is compared with those of other male defendants accused of witchcraft. John Willard is also strong in his defence and occasionally breaks the rules of politeness and meekness in his utterances, but he does this in simpler ways and much less emphatically and systematically than Jacobs. William Hobbs avoids expressions that could be interpreted impolite or aggressive – and saves his life.

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NOTES

- 1 This survey is based on joint research by Kahlas-Tarkka and Rissanen, the Helsinki members of the Salem project team (see the Introduction of this Special Issue).
- 2 Discoursal aspects of power have been discussed, e.g. by Hiltunen (1997; 2010) and Kryk-Kastovsky (2010). For the various aspects of exercising power in discourse situations, see Fairclough (2001 [1989]), especially 36–41, 57–61 and 113–114.
- 3 See Hiltunen (2010) for a discussion of contextualizing the Salem documents, i.e., taking into account the variables with an impact on the discourse. Reference can also be made to, e.g., Rosenthal (1993) and to the *Salem Witch Trials: Documentary Archive and Transcription Project* <http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/>.
- 4 Unless otherwise indicated, in this paper the name “Jacobs” refers to George Jacobs Sr.
- 5 The examinations of Salem female defendants are discussed by Kahlas-Tarkka (this Special Issue).
- 6 The quotations from the documents are based on the original records and on Rosenthal et al. (2009). The editorial practices have been slightly simplified. The numbers of the documents refer to the numbering in Rosenthal et al. (2009).

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